# INSPIRATIONAL TALKS FOR WOMEN'S GROUPS

*By Florence Kerigan*

Helen Miller

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# Inspirational Talks

## For Women's Groups

By
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# FOREWORD

If you are asked to lead the devotions in your society meeting, it is much better if you can make your own talk, choose your own topic, Bible text, and hymns. However, let us face the fact squarely, that all women are not gifted along the lines which will enable them to write a devotional talk and deliver it without self-consciousness. All women are not speakers or writers any more than all women are mothers, advertising executives, or dress designers. So we are making some talks available to those mothers, advertising executives, and dress designers, or whatever, who are called upon to lead an occasional devotional part of a club meeting.

These talks are designed for adaptation, or for delivery as they are.

When you make up your own devotional talks there are certain things to remember.

The important thing is sincerity. The things you say in a devotional talk must come from the heart, whether the talk is original or one from the following pages. A talk on religion in the home, motherhood, or family life with children, is naturally better when given by a mother of several chil-

dren whose home life is respected by her listeners. A talk on women's place in world affairs is better given by some one who is in active business, professional, or political life.

Another thing is humility. It is the place of the speaker to lead the other women into spiritual paths, not to exalt herself, or to browbeat others, or take the opportunity to point out faults with the identity of the guilty one thinly disguised.

Still another is spiritual depth. A devotional leader who merely reads a talk and portions of Scripture is not likely to reach the hearts of her listeners. It is difficult to talk on the intimacies of personal religion, especially if the speaker knows her audience well. This woman sitting in the back row is plainly critical, that one in the front row is thinking of her new hat, and so on. Or, perhaps, let us be frank about it, the speaker has not taken much active part in religious life, is a newcomer to the church, and not accustomed to being asked to do any more than attend weekly services. She has to admit that she knows little about the Bible, and finds it difficult to discover appropriate Scripture readings for the subject she has been given. She has had little experience in praying aloud. In short, she is "sunk." She should accept the responsibility as a challenge, and the talks included in this book will help her to discharge the duty creditably and without embarrassment to herself.

In no case should the talks be delivered without previous preparation. You may not agree with the author's deductions, or with her interpretation of certain Biblical passages. You may search through your concordance and find others which seem to you to fit the subject much better. You might find, if you had not read the talk first, that you were repeating a subject already treated recently, or that the material was not suitable for the group you were addressing.

Consider the talks rather as patterns to be added to, adjusted, adapted, pinned up here, tucked there, and let out somewhere else, to fit the form and figure of your meeting.

It is the earnest wish of the author that you find these talks helpful for use as they are, but especially that you will use them as springboards of inspiration for original devotional thoughts of your own.

FLORENCE KERIGAN

# TALK I

## More Stately Mansions

**Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God.** 2 Corinthians 5: 17, 18a.

**Put off . . . the old man, which is corrupt . . . and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; . . . put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. . . . Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.** Ephesians 4: 22-32.

Have you ever noticed when you approach a closed door that you involuntarily hesitate before knocking, or turning the handle? It is an example of man's distrust of the unknown. No one can see into the future, so we stand at the closed door of the new year, with a momentary hesitation, before we push it open and go in.

We have come out of the furnished room of our last year, filled with the pleasant things we gathered during the days—a bookcase filled with the books we have read, memories of our happy days like bits of colorful bric-a-brac, kind deeds and words like bouquets of fragrant flowers, new

scenes and new friends like pictures upon the walls, and the warmth of love in its fireplace. This is a new room which we are entering, a new addition to the house of our life. Whether it will become attractive or remain bleak and cold will depend upon us—upon what we put into it. Whether it will be clean or dirty, cluttered or orderly, friendly or lonely, will depend upon our attitude toward it. It is ours—a brand-new room, or a brand-new house if we wish—to be decorated and furnished and made into what we wish it to be. "Build thee *more stately mansions,* as the swift seasons roll," sings the poet, Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Leave thy low-vaulted past! Let each new temple, nobler than the last, shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast."

We are facing the beginning of a new year with varying emotions in our hearts. For some of us the year to come will bring renewed hope, for others possible business reverses, or unwelcome changes in family life. For still others it is a challenge to go forward to greater things and will hold success, triumph, a cherished dream come true. To all of us it will bring unexpected pleasures, unsought opportunities to be seized or overlooked, and closer communion with God. For at the threshold of this new year stands God, ready to cross it with us.

**Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.** Isaiah 43: 18, 19.

We take stock of ourselves at the end of the year and ask, "What have we this year that we did not have last year? What friends have we gained, what new things have we learned, what advances have we made in understanding, what new experiences have broadened our sympathies?" Let us not be afraid to look at the debit side. We have made mistakes; we have said a careless word that cost us a friend; we have omitted little kindnesses when opportunity arose for them. The wise adult does not excuse, or condone, or shrug off her mistakes, nor does she brood upon the wrong choice which seemed right at the time. She recognizes them, accepts them humbly, asks forgiveness of the injured ones and of God, and then—she goes into the new year with confidence and courage.

Surely no one ever faced the future with a heavier load on his conscience than did Paul when he met Christ on the Damascus Road. Back there in Jerusalem, and ahead of him in Damascus, he had many friends. They were depending upon him to continue to lead them in stamping out what seemed to them and to him to be a dangerous revolutionary movement within their beloved church. So overwhelmed was he by his encounter

with the risen Lord, that he was rendered helpless. He knew there was only one thing for him to do—to change about completely and ally himself with his former enemies. What courage it required to confess to both friends and enemies that he had been wrong! He had the blood of righteous men on his hands, and there is no doubt that the scenes of violence in which he had taken a leading part came up in the night to torment him. Perhaps the face of the young martyr, Stephen, as he knelt and said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," recurred in his dreams. He could have spent the rest of his life in futile remorse, punishing himself, physically and mentally, to show his repentance. But he did not.

His philosophy is brought out plainly in his letter to the Philippians when he writes, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God." He did not forget them in the sense that he disregarded them, for he referred to his mistakes and his persecutions again and again. But he did not allow the memory of them to prevent him from going on to new work, even though it entailed more shipwreck and more persecution. "Therefore," he wrote to the Corinthians in Second Corinthians 5: 17, 18a, "if any

man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God."

Paul says again, in writing to the Hebrews (3: 14), "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end." It is easy to begin. We make a new resolve and for a few days we remember it, then the stream of routine catches us up, and after a while we find we have forgotten the fine beginning we made—the diary we started, the devotional booklet we were going to read every morning. Or perhaps we set our sights too high and repeated failure made us say, "Oh, what's the use?" On a cross-country motor trip we find many points of scenic interest, but often between them lie flat stretches of plain with nothing but the road lying straight before us, monotonous and uninviting. Yes, it is easy to begin, but the preacher who wrote Ecclesiastes knew human nature very well when he said, "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof."

We do not need to wait for a New Year's Day to begin things. Each new morning is a little birth, a coming out of darkness into light, out of inertness into energy and vigor and awareness. Each day is a separate little life to be spent wisely, or wasted, as we choose. If we start each day with God, there

will be fewer wasted days. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness." (Lamentations 3: 22, 23.) It is good to start the year with enthusiasm and high plans, but it is better if we can end the year with the satisfaction that comes from the knowledge of work well done, a year well spent, something worth while accomplished. It is good to start the morning with eagerness to be about the day's tasks, but it is even better to see those tasks done, and lie down tired at night to sleep. It is good to give our children material and physical advantages, but better to see them growing into worth-while citizens, approaching the end of life with rich, full lives behind them.

So, confidently, with high courage, let us push open the door of the New Year and enter into a "more stately mansion."

## Prayer

*Our heavenly Father, we bow before Thee remembering the past year and its sins of omission as well as of commission. We remember the kind deed we forgot to do, the kind word we were too shy to say, the generous impulse we failed to carry out. We ask Thy forgiveness, O Lord. In this year that lies before us help us to go forward with*

*courage and with twofold faith—faith in Thee and faith in our own strength when upheld by Thee. When we go into this new year may we indeed go into a "more stately mansion." In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.*

*Suggested Hymns:* When Morning Gilds the Skies; Awake My Soul; My Faith Looks Up to Thee (a hymn rededicating ourselves); Still, Still with Thee. Oliver Wendell Holmes' poem, "The Chambered Nautilus" has also been set to music and might be used as a solo if desired.

## TALK II

### Vision and Prayer*

**Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.** Proverbs 14: 34.

**Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.** Proverbs 29: 18.

We who are watching the struggles of a few farseeing men to make a strong United Nations, and are sometimes heartsick at the slow progress they are making, can be encouraged when we remember that our own thirteen colonies went through the same difficulties in making themselves a united nation. The colonies had been settled by men of different backgrounds, racial and religious. There were the Pilgrims and Puritans of New England; the Quakers of Pennsylvania, mostly of middle-class social status; the wealthy Dutch patroons of New York; the Catholics of Maryland; the Huguenots of Georgia; the cavaliers of Virginia and the Carolinas. Each colony had its own form of government, its own currency, its own social customs.

* This talk would be especially fitting for a February meeting, but may be used for any other meeting when a patriotic note is desired.

But these different men fought together for a common cause—their independence from England. But there were thinking men who saw beyond the end of the Revolution, beyond the independence of the colonies. They saw a nation united under God.

Perhaps one of the most criticized, maligned, and libeled men of his time was George Washington himself. Failing in other ways, some of his enemies during his life and since his death have tried to detract from his reputation by accusing him of being irreligious.

Dr. W. Herbert Burk, founder and first rector of the Washington Memorial Chapel at Valley Forge, devoted a great deal of time and expense traveling about the country and collecting books just to dispel this myth. He wrote a book about Washington's religious life, and collected many of the prayers which Washington left in his own handwriting. On the Litany Desk in the Chapel, a commemoration of Washington's prayers for the nation, there is a brass replica of a page from Washington's diary for the day of June 1, 1774, which was a day of prayer for peace between England and the colonies. It reads: "June 1st, went to church and fasted all day." In the windows of the chapel porch we find Washington's valedictory prayer for the American people: "I commend

the interest of our dearest country to the protection of Almighty God and those who have the superintendence of them to His holy keeping." On the altar is a framed, illuminated copy on vellum of Washington's Prayer for the Nation.

Let us bow our heads as I read it now:

"Almighty God, we make our earnest prayer that thou wilt keep the United States in thy holy protection; that thou wilt incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to government; and entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another and for their fellow citizens of the United States at large. And, finally, that thou wilt most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility and pacific temper of mind which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion, and without a humble imitation of whose example in these things we can never hope to be a happy nation. Grant our supplication, we beseech thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

With a leader of such vision, it is not surprising that the thirteen colonies rode triumphantly through the storms that beset them during the early years, and increased in size and influence.

The second great leader through a national crisis, Abraham Lincoln, had to face the same

charges—that he was a member of no church, and therefore irreligious. Lincoln grew up in a pioneer settlement where there was no regular preaching service and where the circuit rider came perhaps two or three times a year to hold a meeting. A story is told of how the small Abe waited for the circuit rider to come by and stopped him and urged him to come with him to the clearing back of the little log home and say a few words over the grave of his mother who had died in the winter. During his stay in New Salem he came under the teaching spell of Stephen Cartwright, the fiery Methodist evangelist who later became Lincoln's political opponent. Lincoln refused to be carried away emotionally by Cartwright and similar evangelists, but he was by no means irreligious. One has only to read his speeches to feel the deep and sincere religious convictions that he had. A room in the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington is set aside as a Lincoln memorial room because it was there that he often came, during prayer meeting time, and sat alone, pouring out his troubled soul to God.

These men had vision, and could not only see ahead to the uniting of the states of this great country, but saw the nation as a Christian nation under God. And we *are* a Christian nation. The Christians in our country far outnumber those of

other faiths. A very small percentage profess to be atheists or agnostics.

We do not always realize this fully. But if we could see ourselves through the eyes of a foreigner we might see things differently.

A few years ago a Jew from Holland told an American his first impressions of this country. "I stood on Fifth Avenue on Sunday morning," he said, "and I couldn't understand it. I said to my friend, 'This is Sunday. People do not work on Sunday. Where are they all going?' 'To church,' said my friend. I did not believe it, so we walked down Fifth Avenue and we saw people streaming into the churches." "But people go to church in Europe, don't they?" asked the American. He shrugged. "Oh, some. Perhaps in England it is different. But in Amsterdam, Paris, Berlin—no. Of course some go to church, but mostly Sunday is thought of as a gay day for parties and picnics and recreation. It is not the custom there to go to church—here it is."

The custom to go to church? Well, it *is!* While we wish more people did attend church services regularly, we must admit that the majority of the people we know personally do attend some church, and call themselves by some name which indicates their religious faith. We may not believe with our friends, but we respect their right to their beliefs,

and their right to attend churches where their faith is taught.

This, too, is the result of the vision of the founders of this great nation. A man may run for office, and a citizen may vote, regardless of his religious beliefs. As long as he does not interfere with the rights of his neighbors, or commit an illegal act in the name of his religion, he may worship in any way he pleases. In any big city you will find members of many Christian and non-Christian sects living together in peace and harmony.

Let us keep it that way. Let us keep the people streaming into the churches on Sunday morning, because it is the custom. Let us keep Sunday a family day when we all attend church together and all share in the special quality that makes Sunday different from just any other day.

**Let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield. Psalm 5: 11, 12.**

Washington was not content merely to dream. He worked and prayed. He wrote a great many prayers. I wonder how many of us have ever written one original prayer unless it was in preparation for a meeting such as this?

There is a quaint and beautiful expression com-

ing into favor when some one gives a friend an article of wearing apparel: "Wear it in good health." In a sense that is a prayer of dedication for that gift. Why don't we privately, without ever telling any one, write a prayer of dedication for the new washing machine, or the typewriter we have bought for our son in college, or the new golf clubs we are giving our husband?

Children who come out of homes where every common task is a holy one, and every implement is dedicated to holy use, and God's presence is felt constantly, will not turn against that way of life when they grow up. A nation is made up of individuals and it can be only as Christian as its individual members are Christian. The United States is taking a tremendously influential place in the world of today, and will be even more powerful in the world of tomorrow. Whether it remains a Christian nation depends upon us mothers, and teachers, church-school workers, and leaders of young people. Let us go forward in confidence, with vision, and in prayer.

## Prayer

Recite the words of the hymn, "O God Our Help in Ages Past" in unison.

*Suggested Hymns:* God of Our Fathers; America the Beautiful; and God Bless Our Native Land.

## TALK III

### The Spiritual "Green Thumb"

**Behold, a sower went forth to sow;**

**And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:**

**Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:**

**And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.**

**And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:**

**But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.** Matthew 13: 3b-8.

Some of us have "green thumbs" and practically anything will grow for us; some of us, on the other hand, say we can not grow a thing. Perhaps there had been a conversation along those lines while Jesus and His friends watched a sower.

"When the seed is cast on top of the ground that way, the birds will eat it," said one.

"That's a very stony field, it seems to me," said another.

"He's getting close to the edge where weeds and thistles grew up last year," said still another.

"But most of it is going on the part that is plowed and turned over and looks rich and soft," said the optimist of the group.

Perhaps Jesus told the story then, or perhaps He remembered it and told it later, or perhaps it happened quite differently. Anyway, we have the story, and it deals with the seed that falls from the sower's hand on good ground, on stony ground, on weedy, neglected ground, and on top of the earth where the birds see it and gobble it up. The seed is like the Word of God, Jesus pointed out.

We do not need to go to oriental lands, or even to the country places in our own land—we can see how that works right in our own homes and in our Sunday-school classes.

We all wish our children's hearts were good fertile ground, where the seeds of good citizenship, religious devotion, and fine character would grow and flourish. We are glad for those in whose hearts the seed of God's Word has found a place to take deep root and make vigorous growth. Fine Christian men and women in all walks of life show that their hearts were fertile soil.

The other extreme is the heartbreaking one of juvenile delinquency and adult crime. Within the last few years the tendency has been to try to fix the blame for young hoodlums and older criminals upon their parents, their teachers, broken homes,

unhappy home life, maladjustment to society, and various other things. No one wishes to face the fact that there are stony hearts which resist the seeds of righteousness. If a seed falls on a rock it will not grow, and no amount of explaining or making excuses will make it grow. Jesus does not try to excuse evil. He admits its presence, and calls it evil, and condemns it.

**And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.**

**For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.**

**But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. John 3: 19-21.**

The Word of God falls upon an inattentive heart, casually, and other thoughts come in and carry it away and it is gone. That can be helped as the sower replaces lost seed. It can be planted again, and again if necessary, and yet again. Repetition will insure its final lodging. That is why family devotions mean so much. Some families have family prayers on Sunday mornings only, because that is when the family is a little less hurried. Some have no family devotions at all, but trust that the children will get spiritual help in church school, and "by the wayside" outside the home. But suppose on that Sunday the child's mind is

centered on something else, some school problem, some plans for the week-end recreation, something just read or heard or seen the night before on television. The words go in one ear and out the other. By having family prayers every day the minds and hearts will not be centered on something else *all* the time, and there are seven times as many chances that the seed will escape the birds of inattention and take root.

It is a peculiar fact that no horticulturist has ever been able to explain, but weeds always grow faster and higher and stronger than even the sturdiest of cultivated plants. They send out big branching roots and take the nourishment from the soil; they suck up all the moisture they can reach; and they spread out their branches and shade the tender, cultivated plant so that it gets no sun. After a while the plant gives up. We always want the *good* seed to grow in the hearts of our children. A little boy may be kind and understanding and readily accept moral truths. But he is weak, and easily led. His playmates make fun of him for going to Sunday school, and laugh at him if he mentions wanting to do the right things. All around him he sees a way of life which seems to him more rugged than the Christian way—he wants to be like the big boys on the football team and be accepted by his fellows as a regular guy;

he reads the comic books the other boys read and follows the radio and television programs they like and talk about; he learns to be careless about his speech and his manners and his appearance. A wise parent weeds out the undesirable influences on her child's life—the friends who are not good, the harmful comic books, the programs of violence, the entertainment which stresses the wrong attributes. It is hard to do, but there again home influence can accomplish wonders. A boy who loves his mother and admires his father because of their fine, sterling qualities as shown day after day in the home, will not long admire the less worthy things. Give the sprouting seed a chance to get established by ruthlessly pulling out the weeds, and soon it will be strong enough to crowd the weeds out by itself.

Jesus told another parable about a sower also. (Matthew 13: 24-30.) This one sowed a field and in the night an enemy came and cast weed seed all over it. These seeds, tares, looked so much like wheat that they could not be separated from it when they were little. Those of us who plant flower gardens know how much alike seedling ragweed and marigolds are. But let them grow together and when they are mature there is a very great difference between them. No one cultivates ragweed, but late summer and fall gardens, ablaze

with marigolds, are, indeed, spots of great beauty.

So in the world it is hard for mature people to tell the good from the evil sometimes, and we can not expect young people to be wiser. The people around us in the world are not all good. We can not tell the good from the evil just by looking at them. If murderers and bankrobbers looked like murderers and bankrobbers it would make the lot of policemen a happier one.

Even within ourselves there are seeds of the wheat and the tares. Paul himself said, "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." (Romans 7: 19, 20.) A very famous man, watching a drunken derelict going through the night, said humbly, "There, but for the grace of God, go I." And as the old quatrain has it:

"There's so much of good in the worst of us,
And so much of bad in the best of us,
That it ill becomes the most of us
To talk about the rest of us!"

So, as we get out into the warm spring sunshine and plant our gardens for the summer, may the thought of the sower and his seeds, and the cultivation of a garden or a wilderness, a lawn or a weedpatch, be translated into spiritual terms

in our own lives. Are we making our lives gardens in which lovely flowers of kindness and understanding and devotion and graciousness are being cultivated? Are we training and encouraging the lovely qualities in our children to a beautiful flowering?

## Prayer

*Dear heavenly Father, let the parable of the sower be good seed upon a fertile soil in our hearts. Thou who lovest beauty enough to make the waste places green with vines and bright with wild flowers, who makes the desert to bloom, help us to make our lives beautiful, and our deeds fragrant. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Suggested Hymns:* We Plow the Fields; For the Beauty of the Earth; Bringing in the Sheaves.

## TALK IV

### "Whispering Hope"*

**For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell.** Song of Solomon 2: 11-13.

Such is the pen picture we have of spring in Palestine—a time of joyous awakening after the rainy season, when the dry land burst forth into grass and flowers and the vineyards put forth tender leaves and the fig trees and the pomegranates became green. In every country and in every time, people have hailed spring with joy.

Perhaps spring means less to us today than it did to our ancestors. Back in pioneer days winter was a time for rugged living. It meant building fires in individual fireplaces or stoves, chopping wood or carrying scuttles of coal from coal bin to stove, and cleaning out ashes at least once a day from at least one stove. The kitchen with its gleaming coal range casting a rosy glow from its front grate was the coziest room in the house,

* A program appropriate for the Easter season.

the only one heated for everyday use in many cases, and the place where the family gathered and where neighbors dropped in to chat. Today's kitchen with its streamlined whiteness of porcelain and enamel is more of a laboratory than a social center. But if we are tempted to become sentimental over the old coal range and the old-fashioned kitchen that was the "heart of the home" let us remember that that old coal range required a great deal of time and energy to keep it fed and shining and of even enough temperature to be efficient for cooking!

Winter, fifty or seventy-five years ago, was a time of drafty rooms, of sleeping under as well as over feather beds, of waking to spend a shivering half hour making up the banked fires, and chopping the ice in the water pitchers in the unheated bedrooms. Chilblains on hands and feet, frosted noses and cheeks, chapped hands and the more serious menaces of bronchitis and pneumonia were taken as a matter of course. Science has improved our endurance of winter, but science can not make it as joyous a season as spring.

To us, spring is a time of hope, of anticipation, of fulfillment of the faith we felt when we planted our bulbs in the sharp, windy days of autumn. Something leaps joyfully within us when we see the mist of green on the willows, the sunlight

snarled in the boughs of the forsythia and held captive to earth, the blue-pencil lines of scilla along the borders of the tulip bed.

Yes, spring to us is more than a season. It is a symbol.

It was not by accident, nor by chance, that Jesus was crucified and rose again in the springtime, in the season of the Jewish Passover. "The Lamb of God," John the Baptist called Him (John 1:29, 36), and Philip explained to the eunuch of Ethiopia that Jesus was the "lamb" of whom Isaiah wrote (Isaiah 53:7, 8). Paul, in writing to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 5:6-8), referred to Christ as our Passover sacrificed for us.

The story of the Passover is told in Exodus 12. The angel of the Lord passed over all the houses whose doorways were smeared with blood of the lamb which God had ordered killed and prepared in a certain way. From that time until the present day the Jews remember the Passover as they were instructed in that chapter. Jesus kept the Passover strictly. It was to eat the Passover feast with His friends and worship in the temple that Jesus came to Jerusalem, knowing He was going to His death.

The Passover marked the end of the bondage of the Hebrews in Egypt. They were no longer slaves, but free men. So the death of Jesus, His sacrifice upon the cross, marked the end of human

bondage to fear and superstition and death.

The great message of Easter, of course, is the resurrection. It is a promise of untold comfort to the bereaved who know that all is well with their departed loved ones.

The first Easter gave us more than assurance of life after death. It was the dramatic beginning of our Christian faith. Jesus was a Jew, keeping the Jewish laws and teaching and preaching to the Jews. If He had not been crucified, if He had lived out a natural life, even a wonderful one of miracles and marvelous teachings, the Gentile world might never have heard of Him. But right at the height of His popularity, in the prime of His earthly life, He was executed as a common criminal. The whole of Jerusalem rang with the news. His disciples were in despair and heartbroken. They had expected Jesus to set up a kingdom by force of arms, but now He was dead, and there seemed to be nothing in the future—nothing for them to do but take up their old life and go on as if He had never been. But—

On the first day of the week, at sunrise, the three Marys found the heavy stone rolled away from His temporary tomb. At first they thought the body had been stolen, and then one after another of them saw Him, talked with Him, and the disciples even ate with Him. There was no room

for doubt — Jesus had arisen from the dead.

Without that resurrection there would be no Christian church, no Christian faith, no Christian hope to give us strength in time of bereavement.

The people who heard Jesus—even His own disciples—were in doubt as to who He was. Even John the Baptist, who had hailed Him as the Lamb of God, sent to Him from prison and asked who He was (Matthew 11: 2-6). Some of the Jews believed in life after death, and some did not. The resurrection of Jesus put an end to such doubts and fears and misunderstandings. Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16: 16) became the foundation stone of a new church. The resurrection became the chief theme of its preachers.

When we examine the history of the Christian world, every one must acknowledge that hospitals, orphanages, a gradual understanding and accept ance of the Christian code of morals and ethics and social reforms are all the result of Christian influences. If we have doubts about that because we are not yet perfect, let us set the everyday life of non-Christian countries beside life in our own, and see the great difference. If we are honest, we must admit that those differences are due primarily to Christianity.

So the first Easter day marked the bursting

asunder not only of a tomb in a garden in Palestine, but the bursting asunder of all that had kept man in darkness and ignorance, and superstitious fear. It gave light for darkness, joy for despair, assurance for doubt, faith for superstition.

In old Russia, people meeting each other on Easter morning would cry, "Christ is risen," and the reply would come back joyfully, "Christ is risen indeed!" A story is told of how at the beginning of Communism, a minister faced his supposedly irreligious audience and said suddenly, "Christ is risen," and immediately the reply came in a thunderous roar from the crowd, "Christ is risen indeed!" By the efforts of some heroic missionaries and workers on both sides of the iron curtain, the Christian faith is being kept alive in Communist Russia. Let us hope that Easter means new courage to these people, forced to worship, as did the early Christians, in fear and in secret. Let us hope that many a Russian heart will know that Easter means new life, new strength to go on.

"I am come," said Jesus, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10: 10.) Not just life after death, but more abundant life on this earth.

We have called this talk "Whispering Hope." It should rather be called "Shouting, Triumphant

Hope," so sure is our victory over sin, death, evil, and fear. With Christ for us, who can be against us, indeed?

Read responsively 1 Corinthians 15: 35-58.

## Prayer

*Our dear heavenly Father, Thy Son has promised us a fuller and more abundant life. Help us to enrich our lives and those about us by living a full Christian life. May we have eyes to see and ears to hear the sights and sounds of human distress; may we have hearts that are touched, and hands that are ready to relieve. We pray for the Christians in lands where their faith is being tested in cruel ways; for the Christians in Asia and other places who are finding their way beset by difficulties. Give them courage and strengthen their faith. May this Easter season bring us a step nearer the end of war and violence, and the coming of Thy kingdom on earth. In the name of Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, Thy Son, we ask it. Amen.*

*Suggested Hymns:* Christ the Lord Is Risen Today; Low in the Grave He Lay; There Is a Green Hill.

# TALK V

## Her Children Shall Rise Up*

There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course. . . .

. . . There appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Luke 1: 5-16.

* A program appropriate to honoring motherhood.

The month of May has come to be synonymous with Mother's Day. In the beginning, some thirty odd years ago, its founder, the late Miss Anna Jarvis, had no intention of starting anything but a recognition of Mother by giving her a day set apart. Miss Jarvis later was very outspoken against the growing commercializing of the day, which she felt detracted from, rather than added to, its sentiment.

Much has been written about motherhood, some of it beautiful, and some of it almost maudlin in its oversentimentality. But we do not need to go into the sentimental phases of motherhood. We all had mothers, and most of us were fortunate enough to keep them long after we grew up, and perhaps to have them with us and care for them in their later years as they cared for us in our early years.

But let us face it realistically. There are mothers—and mothers, just as there are women—and women. The biological fact of motherhood does not often transform a sinner into a saint. Neither does motherhood magically change a girl who is definitely a lightweight, mentally, into a paragon of wisdom. But how often we are inclined to think it does, or should!

The Bible faces motherhood frankly. Let us look at some of the mothers of the Bible. Eve,

of course, was called the "mother of all living." We know a little more about Sarah and Hagar and still more about Rebekah.

Rebekah's type of ambition for her favorite son is often seen today. Isaac preferred Esau, the stronger of his twin sons, the big, hairy, mighty man of hunting prowess, who cared only for his immediate needs and was willing to sell his future for the gratification of the moment. Rebekah preferred Jacob, the more sensitive twin who had the qualities she knew were essential for a desert chieftain, and she was not above scheming to get what she wanted for Jacob. She has been condemned, but in how many homes today that very thing is being done—more subtly perhaps, but still Mother knows how to wangle things from Dad for her favorite child.

From a very early day in Hebrew history, women were given a higher place than they held in most oriental households. They even took part in national affairs. Deborah was one of the judges (see Judges 5), and in the same chapter there is the story of Jael, a woman patriot. Deborah was not only a judge and a prophetess, but a wife and "a mother in Israel" as well.

Childless women will appreciate the story of Hannah who prayed so earnestly for a child that the temple priest thought she was under the in-

fluence of wine. (See 1 Samuel 1; 2). When the child was born she called him Samuel. Very often an only child, especially one born late in life, is held closer to the mother than the average child. But this mother was strong enough to let her child go, even at a very early age, to be brought up in the temple and dedicated to God's service.

The Bible does not show us perfect people in its pages, with the exception of Jesus, of course. It does not condone evil, but it does not draw a curtain over it, either. Even a man as fine as David sinned. He coveted the wife of one of his generals, saw to it that the general did not return from the wars, and married her. She, too—Bath-sheba—was an ambitious mother. She insisted that her son Solomon inherit the kingdom after David's death.

Quite a different woman was Jezebel, wife of Ahab, a wicked woman, a follower of Baal, who brought the worship of the heathen god into her household, converted Ahab to it, and brought up her children in its belief. When Ahaziah, Ahab's son-in-law, the son of another wicked woman, Athaliah, came to the throne he "did evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother" (1 Kings 22: 52), and "his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly." It was this same Athaliah who took

such a terrible vengeance against the royal house of Judah after her son was killed.

Over against these two set Eunice, the mother of Timothy, the daughter of Lois (Acts 16: 1; 2 Timothy 1: 5). Timothy's father was a Greek, but it was his mother's Jewish religion that he followed.

In homes today it is often the mother who listens to the children's bedtime prayers, starts them in the habit of church attendance, and is most concerned about their spiritual growth.

One mother said recently, "I am going to let my children choose their own church when they get old enough. I was forced to go when I was too little to enjoy it, and my husband's memory of church is of having to sit still and listen to long, dry sermons. Because religion *does* mean so much to me, I want my children to choose voluntarily." Is she right? *Will* those children make a choice when they become "old enough"? And how old is "old enough"?

Today much emphasis is being put on the reasons for juvenile delinquency. Perhaps too much blame is put on the home life of a wayward child, and perhaps not enough. It is Mother who sets the moral tone of the home, whether high or low or marked by indifference. "Her children shall arise up and call her blessed." What more can one

add in the way of a tribute to a Christian mother —to our own Christian mothers, than that?

## Prayer

*Our heavenly Father, we thank Thee for our own mothers, for the companionship and love of those who are still with us, and for the golden memories of those who have passed on to be with Thee. May we be aware of the responsibilities of motherhood; may we also include our children's friends in our mothering love. Bless all motherless children everywhere, and bless all mothers who have lost their children. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Suggested Hymns:* Blest Be the Tie That Binds; Faith of Our Fathers; My Mother's Bible. Or, in preparation for this service, have several members suggest hymns which they connect with their mothers. Songs My Mother Taught Me, by Dvorak, might be used as a solo.

## TALK VI

### "Forsaking All Others"

Let us read responsively, Psalm 45: 8-16.

This psalm which we have just read, called "a song of loves," was probably used for weddings. There is the bride in fine raiment and perfumed, with her attendants and her maid of honor. She is leaving her own family and home for her bridegroom's. Even the gifts and the reception are mentioned. It is the last verse that interests us the most: "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth."

That is addressed to both the bride and groom. Up until the wedding day each was part of a family group, obedient to their parents, being under their jurisdiction. They thought of family life in terms of themselves and their parents and brothers and sisters. From now on there is a new relationship. They will think of home life in terms of each other, and of their future children.

As today, so in those far-off days, the bride dreamed dreams of her children who would not

be ordinary children but be given into her hands to be made into princes. They will not just naturally be princes, notice, or grow into princehood accidentally—the parents will *make* them princes. Somewhere in this democratic land of ours a mother is looking into the childish face of a boy who will be a future President. Future inventors, musicians, writers, ministers, businessmen, are today given into the hands of young parents to be developed, encouraged, *made* into the very highest type of manhood and womanhood.

Let us look into one of those new households. The bride arises early and prepares breakfast for her husband, then she goes to market and buys food and carries it home. She has been given a little money and she invests it wisely. She is planning to stay up late tonight to finish some work she is doing. She is interrupted in her work by a solicitor who is canvassing for funds for a charitable institution. She plans ahead for the clothing she and her husband will need to have cleaned and pressed. She spends an afternoon making gifts to sell at a church bazaar, and as she works she remembers that her husband's employer complimented her husband on his good fortune in winning her.

Does not that sound like the average day in the life of a modern bride? When you get home,

turn to Proverbs 31, verses 10 to 31, and see how little the ideals of a homemaker have really changed in all the centuries!

"Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it," says the psalmist. The rest of the psalm (127) gives us a glimpse into a happy home. "As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth." There we have the rounded picture—the house dedicated to the Lord and made into a home, and the children gathered about the parents.

There is, of course, the material aspect of a home to be considered. Four walls and a weather-tight roof are necessary. It is the bride's place to keep it neat and clean and make it into a home, and the husband's place to earn the money to pay for it, keep the household out of debt, and plan for the future with his wife. The very first night in the house—or apartment, or rented room—they should plan for the spiritual life within their home. It may be simple, just a few verses from the Bible, a hymn sung together or played on a record player, or a prayer, but such a devotional service carried out through the years will have its effect upon the home and upon the children who go out from it.

Some of us no longer call ourselves brides. We have grown-up children who are married or soon to be married. It gave us a peculiar feeling—those

of us who have married sons—when we first realized that our boy was putting another woman into the honored place that had always been ours. It was a wrench to know that after a certain day he would no longer be a member of our family circle, but the head of another. The words, "forsaking all others," in the marriage ceremony seemed leveled at us.

The old cliche was given us at least once: "You're not losing a son, you are gaining a daughter!" We catch hold of that grain of comfort. Of course! He is still our boy, and his wife is our daughter! So far, everything is all right. But from there on we are likely to get into trouble. Our new daughter does not do things the way we trained our own daughter to do them. There are things she should know about our son and the way he likes things done and the way we like them done for him. And she is so appallingly *young!* We have had so much experience, gained the hard way, that we feel we must give her the benefit of it. However, she does not always accept our help—she may even term it interference. And we are surprised to discover that *her* mother has things to say about the way our son is acting! Some mothers just can not let their children go, can not stand back and let them make their own mistakes.

Of course, there are also some children who can

not let their mothers go. Some just move right in with their parents. "This way we'll all share what we have," they say, carelessly. "We can both work and have the advantages of better things than if we tried to struggle along on my salary." Or perhaps they take an apartment near by, and if the least little thing goes wrong son or daughter goes to Mother for advice or sympathy. It is flattering to Mother, and even more flattering to the mother-in-law, but the wise one will know when to say, "Sorry, dear, that's for you to decide and work out for yourself." It is especially hard to keep hands off when the mother or mother-in-law becomes Grandma.

No, we can never have our married son or daughter back in the same family relationship, even though the young couple may be living with us temporarily. We look back to the days when they were children, and sigh a little, but looking backward is a sign of age. Those things are vanished. Better things are ahead. The Bible shows us an ideal mother-in-law in the Book of Ruth. Because Ruth loved her husband's mother so much she left her land, her friends, her family, and even her own religion, to go with her into a strange country. In real life there are many mothers-in-law whose sweetness and lovable personalities have changed the word into "mother-in-love." It is, for every

mother, an ideal well worth working toward.

And look at the romance in the word "grandmother." A grandmother remembers birthdays, sends gifts at Christmas, has family parties at Thanksgiving, has her grandchildren visit her and spoils them just a little. Son's marriage was just the beginning of a wider family circle, a farther-reaching sphere of influence.

## Prayer

*Our dear heavenly Father, wilt Thou bless all the new homes which are being set up throughout the land. May they be built on the solid foundation of love of a man and a woman for each other and for Thee. May they be places dedicated to the highest of Christian ideals, and may the children who come out of them in the future be truly the princes of the earth. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Suggested Hymns:* For the Beauty of the Earth; Blest Be the Tie That Binds.

## TALK VII

### The Long View*

Read Psalm 104: 1-13, 18, 24-27, 32.

The summer months are times of rest and recreation for many of us, with a trip somewhere, and a change of scene. When an artist paints a picture, he gets away from it and takes the long view to get a different perspective on it. It is good for us to get a new perspective on our homes and our families and our jobs by getting away from them for a while. Every day things are often taken for granted and not "seen" after a while.

A woman was riding in a bus from Cincinnati to Washington. Her seat-mate talked with her a little and her repeated remark was, "I want to see the mountains." Night came and they settled down to sleep. In the early morning, mountains were all around them in tumbled splendor. The seat-mate opened her eyes sleepily. "Tell me when we come to the mountains," she said. "Well, look out

* This talk is suitable for the final meeting before the summer break. Or, if you have meetings throughout the summer, it would be equally appropriate for July or August.

the window," laughed the traveler, "for there they are." The woman looked out, then looked at the traveler incredulously. "Is *that* what them is?" she demanded. "Well," the traveler admitted, "they're not the Rockies, but they're pretty good examples of our eastern mountains. Where is your home?" she added, expecting the woman to respond that she lived in flat prairie land of the midwest. "I live in Gatlinsburg, Tennessee." "Why," gasped the traveler, you're right among the finest mountain country in the East!" "I reckon," she said slowly, "if *them's* mountains!"

One of the most valuable results of a trip away from home is our attitude toward the people we meet. Home missions takes on a new meaning when we can visualize mountain cabins far from any settlement, served by a community center with its chapel; or when we have seen Indians in their hogans or pueblos; when we have seen Mexican fiestas; and when we have seen migrant families. These people are not just "projects." They are human beings like ourselves. They are human beings with features and names and personalities which we remember. When we give to Indian mission work after a visit to the spot, we are giving to the little Navajo girl we saw minding her sheep on a mesa, and the southern mountaineer work is personified by the barefoot boy in ragged overalls

standing by the road watching us go by. If it were possible for every member of every missionary group to go around the world in a leisurely fashion and analyze the scene, missionary gifts would soar. But we only know what we read about them, and the teeming millions in Asia and Africa are many miles away.

Even those of us with 20-20 vision do not see everything. A microscope opens up a new world of fantastic beauty; a telescope stretches the firmament to dimensions as yet unbounded, by showing us stars and constellations and solar systems beyond the power of the naked eye to see. Those of us who do not have perfect natural vision have it corrected with glasses so that we can read easily and see distant objects plainly.

Sometimes the eyes of the spirit may need help also. It is easy for us to go off on a trip and see only ourselves—*our* comfort, *our* little inconveniences, *our* personal pleasures. So many of us when we travel leave our manners at home. If you doubt this, watch a bus loading at any good-sized terminal!

Whether we travel alone or with friends, we shall see a great deal more if we pack our Bible in our suitcase and take the Lord with us as an unseen companion.

All around the early Hebrew nation were

heathen nations who worshiped the gods of nature. Abram brought his family out of Ur from under the worship of the moon, and down into Egypt where animals were worshiped, then out into the wilderness where they came into contact with many primitive tribes. Men of early civilizations worshiped things they could not understand—the sun, the moon, certain bright stars, the thunder and lightning, a rushing stream, mountains, the sea—all these became gods to them. But not so with the Hebrews. They knew that their God was the God of all those things.

The Book of Job is said by some critics to be the oldest of the Bible books, but look what he says:

"Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? Or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds that abundance of waters may cover thee? Canst thou send lightnings that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are?"—Job 38: 31-35.

We may not be able to travel far from home this summer—in distance along the surface of the earth, that is—but always just by looking upward, our imagination can take us millions of miles away.

We are not all near mountains or the sea or the most scenic spots of this country, but we all have unknown millions of miles of space above us. And in that space stirring dramas take place unheeded.

Thunderstorms come up swiftly, with dark clouds rushing together like troops of cavalry into battle. "With clouds he covereth the light; and commandeth it not to shine by the cloud that cometh betwixt. . . . Hear attentively the noise of his voice and the sound that goeth out of his mouth. He directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning unto the ends of the earth. After it a voice roareth: he thundereth with the voice of his excellency; and he will not stay them when his voice is heard. God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we can not comprehend."—Job 36: 32—37: 5.

Or we look up into the rich, deep blue of a summer sky and see great masses of white clouds foaming and billowing up into fantastic shapes like the cotton candy children buy at fairs. When the sun shines on them the edges are burnished, and at sunset they become great purple and rose and gold mountain masses. "Dost thou know when God . . . caused the light of his cloud to shine? Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds . . . ?"—Job 37: 15, 16.

Read Job 36: 22-33; and chapters 37 through 41.

You will read them several times and find new beauty in their sonorous phrases.

The Hebrews were not a seafaring people. Those of us who are not good sailors will read sympathetically verses 24 to 30 of Psalm 107.

With a good concordance you will find many other verses and passages about the out of doors, for God was revealing his message to an outdoor people through the pictures they knew best.

Whether you travel across the continent, or take a vacation cruise, or just spend an afternoon or evening looking up into the sky, take time to be still and know that back of, and over, and under, the whole universe is God. After our souls have stood with God on the rim of the farthest star, we can come back to our routine tasks and our familiar surroundings and find some of the starshine still around them.

Prayer

*Our heavenly Father, we have lived in a swiftly-paced world for too long. Help us to get away for a short time, to mount up among the stars with Thee, to get a new perspective upon our little lives and the trivial things that seem so important to us. Wherever our trips may take us — under desert stars, among the mountains, by the sea—may the natural wonders increase our knowledge of Thee, and of Thy greatness. If we go to man-made*

*cities, may the examples of architecture, engineering, and art increase our wonder that Thou hast endowed man with such gifts. May the people we meet broaden our sympathies and widen our understanding as we remember that they, like us, are Thy children. Bless us all as we go forth from this place. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Suggested Hymns:* America the Beautiful; I Know Not What the Future Hath; God of the Earth, the Sky, the Sea; The Spacious Firmament on High; God Be With You Till We Meet Again.

# TALK VIII

## The Distractions of Little Things

**Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.**

**And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus feet, and heard his word.**

**But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.**

**And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:**

**But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.** Luke 10: 38-42.

Many a homemaker can sympathize with Martha as we read this little intimate scene in the life of Jesus. That quiet home in the little village of Bethany was a retreat for Him. Lazarus was His friend, and Lazarus' two sisters, Mary and Martha, made Jesus welcome when He came to visit them. Lazarus was probably the bread-winner, Martha the homemaker, and Mary helped Martha. But when Jesus came, Mary left the household duties to the competent hands of Martha and visited with Jesus. The Revised Standard

Version tells us that Martha was "distracted" with much serving.

How many times we have all been in exactly that same position! We are entertaining a guest, and we wish everything to be just so, and we work ourselves up to a perfect frenzy, dashing around doing everything at once, and all the time we are missing the coveted companionship with our guest. Notice it was not Martha's desire to serve which Jesus rebuked, but her "distraction," her attitude toward it, her allowing her concern for the little things to keep her from the big thing.

Martha was so "distracted" by the little, unimportant things that she overlooked her duty as a hostess—to make her Guest feel welcome. She thought she was honoring her Guest by preparing an elaborate dinner, but she was overlooking the great chance she had to talk with the greatest Teacher of all time, and to receive from Him the bread and water of life. Here in her home was the Lord himself, willing to talk with her about the great things of the spirit, but she was too concerned about serving the dinner to care!

But Mary knew. It was this same Mary who broke the costly box of ointment and anointed Jesus' head and feet at the house of Simon the Leper. She was misunderstood for that also, and again Jesus came to her rescue by explaining her

act. We read of this in Matthew 26: 6-13.

There are a great many Marthas among the homemakers and career women of today. Perhaps the thing we American women need to learn more than anything else is the art of relaxing. Happy indeed is the home where Mother and Dad share a hobby, and where outings and recreations are family affairs! Keeping things that way is worth an occasional sinkful of unwashed dishes, or other skipped chores.

Having a routine for one's work is the sensible and businesslike way to do it, but there is something insidious about a routine. It becomes another word for habit, and after a while the habit becomes a rut. It goes on week after week, month after month, year after year.

Now, of course, there is nothing much the career woman can do about it, for routine is necessary. But she can do something about her leisure hours. She can see that *they* do not become standardized. The homemaker also can see to it that she has time for fun with the family, and for her own pleasure.

In the early days of homemaking, or when we were getting established in our career, we had many details to handle and a great deal of work to do, so that we got into the habit of working hard all the time. In our distractions over the

many little things, we forgot the big things—relaxation, recreation, companionship, spiritual renewal.

No one in this world was ever busier than Jesus. Practically all the three years of His ministry were spent in traveling throughout the length and breadth of Palestine—and on foot, at that. Everywhere He went, great crowds followed Him. The sick and the blind and the lame came to Him. People who were outside the social pale came to hear Him and took Him to their homes to dine. Curiosity-seekers followed Him because they had heard about Him and wanted to see Him work a miracle; students followed Him because they had heard of His teachings and had questions to ask Him; Pharisees followed Him to ask questions which they hoped they could trap Him into answering to His disadvantage. Some followed Jesus because they loved Him. Jesus gave them all what they wanted. He healed the sick, forgave sins, answered questions, taught them through parables, and always there were more and more eager crowds.

Jesus had power such as no man had before or since, for He was God as well as man. He could have gone on giving himself to the crowds. But He was man, too, and He became weary and needed rest and spiritual refreshment Himself. Sometimes He went to Bethany for a quiet time with friends,

as we have seen, and sometimes He went into the mountains to pray. At other times He attended social affairs. His first miracle was performed at a wedding at which He and His mother were guests.

If Jesus felt the need for recreation and companionship and spiritual refreshment, and took time from His great work to secure them, surely we should do likewise.

Most young people have hobbies and social contacts. The dangerous time is during the early years of married life when the demands of the family of small children on Mother's time and Father's earning capacity give them the feeling that nothing is worth while except home and family. Hobbies are forgotten, and social contacts are dropped. But the home should not take up the wife's entire attention, nor should the office or store or factory fill the man's entire waking hours. Today, young people are making use of baby sitters and keeping up with their social life. In most big cities there are hobby clubs and hobby courses.

A hobby need not be an elaborate thing. Even as simple an interest as reading aloud may be a hobby. The kind of hobbies that two or more can share are best, but you can share your partner's *enthusiasm* for a hobby if you try, even if it is the kind of activity that you are not able to share.

Even if we are the kind of person—and there

are many—who has no particular hobby, we all need spiritual refreshment oftener than one day in seven. We should never be too busy, or too tired, to attend our church services. We should also take advantage of the opportunity to hear visiting preachers of outstanding worth as they come to our community. Those of us who take an active part in church-school work, as members of the adult class, or as teachers and superintendents, know that the results more than justify the time and effort expended. If we have a voice of average worth and can carry a tune we can usually find a place in the chorus choir, and if we have better than average musical ability we may be used in other ways. Most churches have at least one women's organization such as this one which wishes to expand its membership.

Most people have a vacation period once a year which they spend in having fun. Sometimes they find they do not have fun. For fifty weeks of the year they have been concentrating on working and they are just beginning to relax and enjoy leisure when they have to go back to work again.

The annual vacation has its value, but so do the daily periods of relaxation such as the nightly checker game, an evening spent in a neighbor's home, a concert or similar entertainment, a quiet evening with the family around the radio, the

bedtime snack around the kitchen table, and fortunate indeed is the family where regular family devotions each evening are part of the daily schedule.

Let us try each day, if only for a few moments, to put the world outside and go to a spiritual mountain top to pray.

## Prayer

*Our Father, we have shown by being here today that we know the value of taking time from our many tasks to meditate and pray. We have friends who are too often distracted by the little things. Help us to show them the value of taking time out for meetings such as this, for active church work, for personal service for, and communion with, Thee. Help us to remember Thee especially when the world seems to be pressing too closely around us. In the name of Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

*Suggested Hymns:* Sweet Hour of Prayer; O Lord and Master of Us All; Work, for the Night is Coming.

## TALK IX

### Clay to Granite

**Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.** Proverbs 20: 11.

We know our children intimately, and are inclined to overlook certain defects because of compensating traits. Or we excuse a shortcoming because it is "inherited." But the first day the teacher of kindergarten or primary grade at school sees our child, she forms her opinion based solely on the way he acts. We, as parents, are subjective in our attitude toward our children, and the teachers are objective. We see our children through the eyes of love, and they see them as they are.

Yes, the teacher judges the child at sight, but she is really judging us. From birth to the age of five or six, many rapid changes have taken place in the child's physical, mental, and moral growth. But he settles down, pretty generally speaking, to what we have allowed him to become.

**Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it.** Proverbs 22: 6.

It is natural for the adolescent and the young adult to question religious facts and search himself, and perhaps doubt for a time, but those who lose interest in the church permanently are usually those who did not have very strong home influence along religious lines. If we have brought up our children to believe in spiritual verities; if we have given them memories of family devotions, the family sitting together in church, the family starting out together for Sunday school; if they remember Dad as an elder, or deacon, or usher, or Sunday-school teacher, and Mother as pianist, or singing in the choir, or teaching a class of girls—well, those youngsters are not likely to be led astray for very long. When they marry and have homes of their own, they are likely to bring up their own children in the same way. Unless they do—unless Christian principles continue to be taught in the home as well as in Sunday school and in public schools, we are facing trouble as a nation in the future.

We are teachers in our homes and also examples. Our children see us when we are off guard. They know whether we turn to God in prayer when we are happy and triumphant or only when we are in the depths of despair. They know how we act when we are angry. They know whether we are honest in little things, whether we lie if it is more convenient than to tell the truth, whether we are

always kind — in short, if we are Christian.

(Read Romans 2: 19-23.)

In the early days of the Hebrew race, the child was taught by his father in the home. He was taught portions of the Scriptures, taught to read and write, and given a little training in figures. Certain tribes trained their children for the priesthood, but boys of any tribe might become teachers, or wise men, by going to some outstanding teacher and learning all they could. One such teacher was Gamaliel, who taught Paul, and may also have known Jesus.

Girls were not sent to the village synagogue schools which were set up to teach boys, but were always instructed at home. They learned parts of the Scriptures, and the housewifely arts, but were not taught reading or writing, and perhaps had just enough figuring to do the family marketing.

The father was always the head of the household, although Father and Mother worked together in training the children, and his discipline was never outgrown.

Children were taught to honor and respect their parents. To strike a parent, or even "talk back," was a criminal offense. Patricide was so unthinkable that it was practically never committed.

Usually the son followed the father's business

because the father could teach him what he knew. But there was no compulsion. Jesus, it is believed, worked with Joseph as a carpenter, and then left that trade when the time was right to begin His ministry. Paul was trained by his father to be a tentmaker, and was able to use this skill when he needed to, to earn his support while he was in certain missionary efforts.

Psychologists are divided in their opinions as to the extent that abilities and talents are "inherited." Sometimes the child does not wish to follow his father's or mother's profession, but prefers one of his own choosing. This sometimes causes disappointment and even friction in the family, but both have to understand that it is impossible to live another person's life.

There is another way, too, in which heredity plays a part. The Bible states it negatively—that the iniquities of the father are visited upon the children. The children of a drunkard or of a criminal are looked at askance by the parents of their classmates. On the other hand, we parents sometimes expect too much of our children. The minister's son is expected to be a model of propriety, the professor's daughter is expected to lead her class, the athletic coach's son is expected to star on the football field.

Ezekiel points out that God sees each of us as

an individual person. (Read Ezekiel 18: 19-21.)

The school, the home, and the church work together. We might think of the mature man or woman as a statue first modeled in clay and then chiseled out of enduring granite. The clay is secured, mixed, kneaded, and roughly formed, which is the duty of the home in the preschool days. Then home and school work together in shaping the clay into a semblance of form, with the Sunday school providing the ideal and inspiration for the finished product. After that, secondary school and college and church continue with the permanent "statue." If a child is unfortunate in having a broken home, or is mishandled at home, a sympathetic teacher may help to undo the damage; If an unsympathetic or poorly trained teacher happens to get a child in the formative years, that also may be counteracted later by the right home and school training. But in the teens and early maturity, the chances are that the child's character is set and only life itself can force the changes.

And of course, that happens. Life is the chief school after all, and what we call school is only a preparation for it. So, if we allow our children to grow up unrestricted, undisciplined, we are not really helping them at all, but storing up future trouble for them. Let us not hold our children so close that we can not get a perspective on them.

## Prayer

*Our heavenly Father, some of our boys and girls are leaving us for college and school for the first time. We pray that Thou wilt watch over them and keep them in the right paths. Help us to be reassured that if we have done our part faithfully in training them in Thy law, we will have little to fear. Whether our baby is going to kindergarten for the first time, or leaving home for college or a job, give us the courage to step aside and let others take over part of his care. As we opened our arms to let him take his first step, so let us open our arms of love and let him go out into the world on his own. In the name of Thine own Son, our Lord. Amen.*

*Suggested Hymns:* Shepherd of Tender Youth; Blest Be the Tie That Binds; Saviour, Like a Shepherd Lead Us; Faith of Our Fathers.

## TALK X

### What Shall the Harvest Be?*

**While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.** Genesis 8: 22.

When we look into that verse, what a marvelous promise it is! It is an assurance that we can depend upon the natural laws which God set in force. This is not a helter-skelter world. Spring follows winter, and spring is the time to plant seed. Then summer, and after summer the harvest. What the harvest will be will depend upon three things—what we plant, how well we cultivate it, and weather conditions over which we have no control. One of the great tragedies of a farmer's life is the sight of an entire crop being wiped out by a hail storm or a tornado. But usually the farmer plants good seed, cultivates it, keeps down the weeds, and harvests a crop, not just any old crop, but the crop he planted and cared for. We do not get squash by planting wheat.

A few weeks is the waiting period for most farm crops. Fruit or nut trees require longer.

* This program may be used in connection with a missionary meeting.

Hardwood trees planted by one man may be harvested as timber by his son, or son's son.

The test of the crop very often depends upon the way a farmer goes through the drudgery of the hot days of summer—when the swimming hole calls, and the days are just right for fishing, and his friends are going off on vacation trips. The same test comes when we plant seeds of character in ourselves or our children. It is easy to start out enthusiastically with new resolutions, but when little faults appear we do not bother to correct them, and good impulses dry up in a spiritual drought, or it is easier to follow the crowd. First thing we know our character has not measured up to our hopes, and even we can see that our children are in danger of becoming spoiled.

A Biblical philosopher spent some time watching an ant hill one day and was impressed by the industry of the little creatures. He suggested: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest" (Proverbs 6: 6-8). There were lazy people in those days just as today, it seems, for they are warned: "He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame" (Proverbs 10: 5).

When Jesus ascended to heaven He left the entire future of the church in the hands of eleven apostles and some two hundred disciples. Perhaps some of the two hundred were not faithful, but we know all the eleven were, with Paul added to their ranks. That small group of men went throughout the known civilized world and established churches, kept in touch with them, advised and encouraged them through persecutions. They were tortured and killed for their beliefs, and they had to hold their meetings in caves and tombs, but their numbers grew until finally a Roman emperor had to recognize them, and the Christian church became the accepted church of Rome. Persecution did not stop there. Missionaries who went out into the barbaric tribes of northern Europe were martyred and so were their converts, but still the church spread. The Reformation came along with more martyrdom of both Protestant and Catholic believers. Some one has said truly, "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

The seed was planted by the martyrs and their followers with enthusiasm. A few years ago we boasted that there was no spot in the entire world where Christian missionaries had not been. For nineteen centuries the church has been growing. When is the harvest?

And what will the harvest be? Have we im-

planted the seeds of Christianity so deeply that they will ripen into a harvest in spite of the tares of Communism? Or is the present world crisis the result of failure of our Christian missionaries, businessmen, and travelers, to show the rest of the world that the Christian way is the right way?

According to a recent report in *Newsweek,* missionaries rank lowest of all professions in China, even being a step below prostitutes! What is wrong that after nineteen centuries of Christianity more than half the world is anti-Christian? Christianity offers spiritual wealth, and Communism seems to offer material wealth to the impoverished countries of the world. Our missionaries are only human. Have they slipped up somewhere in their presentation of Christianity? Or can we trust that there are still many Christians among the communistic peoples, and that being driven underground will cause the church to flourish all the more? Churchmen, both Protestant and Catholic, have been persecuted for their beliefs and their outspoken defense of them. There are many others who conscientiously believe they can help their people more by being diplomatic, not tangling with the political powers, and leading their flock in their underground meetings.

The miserable millions of Asia, ill-clad, ill-fed, ignorant, disease-ridden, were glad to receive the

American missionaries with their food and clothing and education and medical care. But their conditions were still pitiful. We can imagine Jesus looking over the world of today with its millions of underprivileged. "When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9: 36-38). The opening verses of the next chapter tell how He sent the Twelve out among them.

**Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.** John 4: 35-38.

We Christians in this country receive the heritage of those who went before us, the saints and martyrs of the early church, the heroes of the Reformation, and we grow up in a church which we did not labor to build. It is for us to keep the church a goodly heritage for those who come after us. Those whom we sent out on the mission field

go into places where others have opened the way. In China and Japan and Korea, in Indo-China and Burma and Siam, there are loyal Christians, the harvest of seeds we did not sow.

Now as never before, the challenge to Christian missions rings out, and youth answers, "Here am I! Send me!" We on the home front send them, with God's blessing, with our money and our prayers and our faith.

(This would be a good time to remember in prayer any members of the church who are in the service of the Lord in foreign lands, and not forgetting those who serve in city missions, among the migratory workers, mountaineers, lumber camps, and foreign settlements in this country.)

Prayer

*Our heavenly Father, we ask Thy blessing on the mission churches of the world, wherever they may be. Strengthen the hands of the workers among the underprivileged peoples of the world, and help them to show by their example the beauty of the Christlike life. Help us to do our part in bringing all the world together under one Shepherd, Thy Son, our Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Suggested Hymns:* Work, for the Night Is Coming; Bringing in the Sheaves; From Greenland's Icy Mountains; Christ for the World We Sing; The Light of the World Is Jesus; Onward Christian Soldiers.

## TALK XI

### "Come Before Him With Thanksgiving"*

We connect Thanksgiving with the Puritans and Pilgrims in this country, usually, and think of the day as an American institution. Compared with living conditions today, and with the standards of living many of them left in England, they seem to have had very little to be thankful for. But it is when one is down to the bare essentials of shelter and heat and food and material for clothing that one is truly grateful. When a bride has ten toasters it is difficult to sound enthusiastic over the eleventh!

However, thanksgiving actually goes back to Biblical days. Individually, the people felt a strong sense of gratitude toward God, and under the leadership of Moses this gratitude was made the basis of a seven-day feast.

**In the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath, and ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days. And ye**

* A program for the Thanksgiving season.

**shall keep it a feast unto the Lord seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. Ye shall dwell in the booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.** Leviticus 23: 39-43.

Those who have gone through certain types of hardship, such as the children of Israel and the Pilgrims did, like to remember it in later years. There is a romantic haze about it which was not noticeable when the events were being experienced. So the children of Israel who grumbled and fussed during their stay in the wilderness wanted to remember it and wanted their descendants to remember it forever. They followed the law which God gave them through Moses, and each year down to the present they made booths of boughs and lived in them for seven days. In the country districts these booths were set up in the fields, and in the cities they were made on the flat roofs of the houses.

The eighth chapter of Nehemiah gives us a very dramatic account of a Feast of Tabernacles, after the people had come back from captivity and were building up the city of Jerusalem. By the seventh month they were fairly well established. Then Ezra the priest gathered all the people together. A wooden pulpit had been built near the water gate,

and there Ezra stood, raised up and in the sight of all the people, with six men on his right hand and seven on his left. When Ezra opened the book, all the people stood up, and Ezra blessed God. The people answered, "Amen, amen," and lifted up their hands and bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord. Then the Levites read from the law and explained it to the people. The next day, Ezra sent them out to bring in boughs from the trees—"olive, pine, myrtle, and palm, and branches of thick trees" —to make booths. They made them on their roofs, in their gardens, in the court of the temple, and even in the street of the water gate, and lived under them. It was the first time in many years that the Feast of Tabernacles was kept, and the people were glad.

How long this feast was observed by the early Christians, or when it was dropped, we do not know. It was probably discarded along with the other sacrificial feasts, for the Old Testament laws which prescribed the feasts were nullified by Jesus' complete and atoning sacrifice. All the Old Testament law was a schoolmaster to lead to Christ, and after He came no more sacrifices were necessary. Jesus commended the scribe who said to love God and one's neighbor was better than sacrifice (Mark 12: 33). And in the Epistles, several kinds of spiritual sacrifices are mentioned: presenting one's

body a living sacrifice (Romans 12: 1); gifts to God's workers (Philippians 4: 18); Jesus, the one sacrifice for the remission of sins in place of the continual sin offerings of animals by the priests (Hebrews 10: 12); and the sacrifice of praise by giving thanks and doing good (Hebrews 13: 15, 16).

Thanksgiving, too, became more personal and more spontaneous. They were urged to "give thanks always for all things" (Ephesians 5: 20) and for triumph in Christ (2 Corinthians 2: 14). Also prayer and supplication were combined with thanksgiving (Philippians 4: 6).

Today, we do not need to wait until a certain date to go through a ceremonial sacrifice to thank God for our blessings. We can thank Him for them at any moment of the day when the sense of gratitude comes to us. Very often those spontaneous expressions of thanks will be for little things. The more we get into the habit of seeing those things and thanking God from our hearts for them, the more things we will see. God's gifts to us are constantly flowing in upon us all day.

Early risers have the glory of the sunrise, and at the other end of the day there is the sunset, both especially colorful at the autumn season, with rich reds and purples and oranges and somber grays and cold jade and ice blue. There is the sparkle of

frost on the meadow weeds and the lawn grass and the leafless shrubs, telling of the coming of winter with spring just a little farther on. There are countless little things in family life for which we can be grateful to God. And let us not forget also to be grateful to each other.

We will find, if we foster an attitude of looking for our blessings, looking for the good things in others instead of finding fault and criticizing, that the good things will increase.

Giving thanks to God is a matter of prayer—the unspoken gratitude from the heart, or the spoken words in family devotions. Sometimes it is harder to express our appreciation to each other. We are inclined to take the little things for granted. There are even some families where an unexpected favor or gift may be received with suspicion. We may understand that the undemonstrative person is grateful, but how much more we like the one whose eyes sparkle and whose face shows her pleasure, and who gives us an impulsive hug and kiss. It is hard for some of us to do that. Some of us freeze up when an expression of appreciation is in order. We feel a little like the small child whose mother prods him, "What do you say for the nice gift, Junior?" And we say, self-consciously, "Thank you," before we really know what the words mean.

It is good to have a day of Thanksgiving with its traditional customs. It is good to have family traditions growing up around the day—church in the morning, a family dinner at home or with Grandma, a quiet afternoon at home, or a football game, and always as part of it an expression of thanks to God for the year's blessings. But it is better to have thanksgiving a part of every day's devotions, a silent or expressed word of grace before meals, and constantly throughout the day, a heart-felt expression of gratitude for the little things.

### Prayer

*Our heavenly Father, everything that we have comes from Thee. Thy blessings are showered upon us as a loving father showers gifts upon his favorite son. Forgive us if we sometimes forget to acknowledge them because of their great number. Help us not to take Thy gifts for granted, and not to forget the word of appreciation to each other. Most of all, we continually thank Thee for the Supreme Gift, Thy Son, our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.*

*Suggested Hymns:* We Plow the Fields; Now Thank We All Our God; Come Ye Thankful People.

## TALK XII

### The Heart of Christmas

Scripture reading: Luke 2, or the following:

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.

But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus. Matthew 1: 18-25.

"What was going on at your house last night?" Mr. Smith asked Mr. Jones. "Having a party?"

Mr. Jones looked surprised. "Why, sure! It was your birthday, wasn't it?"

"Well—yes," said Mr. Smith, a little puzzled.

"I was giving a birthday party for you. Weren't you there?"

"Not since I wasn't invited," said Mr. Smith, stiffly, "but apparently you didn't even miss me!"

A strange conversation? We would think so indeed if we were some one listening to Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones.

But before we laugh too loudly, let us think about it. Is not that what a great many of us do about Christmas? Christmas is the celebration of the birthday of Jesus, but how many families celebrate the day and never invite Jesus to be present and never miss Him!

Christmas is a joyous season, and it should be, because religion is a joyous thing, and Jesus himself came that our joy might be full. The trouble is that in modern times the emphasis has been put on the *joy* of it rather than on the holiness of it. A feast of good things to eat, gifts for our family and friends, decorations for the house and lawn, packages to wrap in original ways, and, finally, mailing to be done, catches us up in a whirl of happy excitement. Some of us may go a little overboard and take on too much over the Christmas season, wearing ourselves down with last-minute frenzied shopping; spending midnight hours on a piece of handwork which took longer than we thought it would;

last-minute details about house-cleaning and dinner on Christmas for all the family—grandparents, aunts, and cousins; arranging parties and other entertainment for the son or daughter home from college for the holidays, bringing a friend or friends. How many of us have said, and heard others say, "I'll be glad when it's over. I love Christmas—but—"

To start earlier to prepare for it is one solution to the problem. But that plan does not work for most of us. We need the Christmas decorations in the stores, the Santa Clauses on the street corners, the Christmas trees and evergreens, to get us into the mood.

At Christmas time the churches have special programs. Some of us are taking part in the program in our own church in one way or another—helping with decorations, making costumes, and so on. Some of us take part in the special music of the choir. The Chamber of Commerce has special lighting effects on the streets. The schools have public exhibitions and programs and concerts. Various civic associations, clubs, and private homes have outdoor tableaux and pageants. These things are made with a great deal of thought and work, and they are intended to be looked at and admired. But how many of us do? How many of us have time for anything but our own Christmas prepara-

tions? And how much of inspiration and spiritual uplift we miss each year by not having the time to visit other churches when concert, cantata, or program dates do not conflict with our own!

Did you ever stop to think that the angels appeared in the heavens and gave their message to the *whole world?* The shepherds on the hills, watching their sheep, were quiet and relaxed, and so they saw the angels and heard their message. In Bethlehem there were unusual crowds of people coming to be taxed. If you have stood in line at an income-tax window around March 15, you know that people on their way to pay taxes are not in a very happy mood. Every available room in the private houses was rented, and the housewives were bustling about making arrangements; in the crowded inn there was artificial gaiety in some of the rooms and in others exhausted travelers slept. No one in the streets of Bethlehem was aware of the birth of the Messiah in a cattle shed behind the inn, none of them saw the great light, nor heard the angel voices. They went about their own little petty businesses, counting rent money, figuring how much they would have left after paying the tax, looking for a place to spend the night, and just around the corner the Prince of Peace was born, the long-awaited Messiah had come, and the heavens had opened to let a host of angels bring

their message of peace and hope to a weary world. But only the shepherds heard, and went straightway to Bethlehem, where they found the Child and worshiped Him.

We are sorry for those who are poor, and for those who are alone, at Christmas time, but perhaps we do not need to be. Perhaps they, like the shepherds, have the time and the energy to relax and look up at the stars. Perhaps it is they, rather than we, who have the spiritual alertness to hear the angels' message, to catch the far-off beat of angels' wings, to see the Christmas star shining with new brilliance. Perhaps they should be sorry for us, rather, for us who have so much that we overlook the important meaning of Christmas.

Let us read the angels' message in Luke 2: 10, 11, 13, 14.

**"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. . . . And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,**

**"Glory to God in the highest,**
**and on earth peace, good will toward men."**

Men today ask each other what shall be done next in the world crisis—will peace ever come? How can nations with differing ideologies live together without conflict? The answer is right there. A Saviour is born, and because of His birth all men

shall praise God and there will be peace among men with whom God is pleased. No men can have true peace in their hearts unless they know their deeds have pleased God. Stripped of its tinsel and glitter, there is the living, glowing heart of Christmas, the secret statesmen are trying to find to solve the problem of a world weary of war and intrigue. It is the answer also to our own anxiety for the future.

## Prayer

*Our Father in heaven, we thank Thee for that first Christmas. Forgive us if we have seemed like children, laying too much stress on the unimportant customs and traditions that have grown up around the day. Open the ears and hearts of the statesmen of the world, so that they may hear the Christmas message, that they may glorify Thee, accept Thy Son, and by doing Thy will bring about peace in the world.*

*We ask it in the name of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Amen.*

*Suggested Hymns:* It Came Upon the Midnight Clear; The First Noel; Hark the Herald Angels Sing.

## TALK XIII

### "Angels Unawares"*

We who live in modern days of accredited hotels, tourist homes recommended by Chambers of Commerce, and reputable motels and tourist cabins, feel perfectly safe as we travel about the country alone—taking reasonable precautions, of course.

But in Bible days, and much later into the late Middle Ages, the traveler in a strange place was often in actual danger. In case of shipwreck, the man who owned the shore on which the ship was wrecked could not only claim the cargo and the ship as bounty of the sea, but could also either kill the crew or take them as slaves. On land, strangers staying overnight in private homes or inns, took a chance that their hosts would not rob them and kill them in their sleep. In many cases travelers were safer lodging in the street (Job 31: 32; Genesis 19: 2, 3; Judges 19: 20, 21) for at least, in case of attack, they had some chance for escape!

* This talk should be modified as needed. You may live in a college community where there are a number of foreign students, or in a town where numbers of foreign people live and work. If so, the paragraph about foreigners can be adapted to fit your circumstances. If foreign people do not come to your community often enough to make that section applicable, it may be left out entirely.

The idea seemed to be that if the traveler were not actually an enemy he was not a friend either, and therefore rated no consideration at all. We can not blame the householder, for all the travelers were not what they seemed, and no one wished to bring evil or vicious men into the midst of his family and prized possessions.

There were some, however, who were concerned about the welfare of the honest wayfarer. Perhaps they had been strangers in a strange land themselves and knew the loneliness, the suspicion, the discomfort of wakeful nights.

In oriental lands in Biblical days it meant something for a host to offer food and shelter to some one. It meant an eternal pact of friendship between the host and guest. After a man had eaten another man's bread it was the rankest treachery for either one to turn against the other. Yet, even in the earliest Bible days—as shown in those two terrible chapters of Genesis 19 and Judges 19—hospitality to the stranger was shown as the ideal. Not only should one offer the sanctuary of his home to the stranger, but once having done so he should protect him from harm at all costs.

But once, as in Genesis 18 and 19, these strangers were angels in disguise, rewarding their hosts with blessings.

Today many people operate tourist homes be-

cause they are lonely and enjoy meeting strangers. They will tell you that many lovely people have stayed with them. But those who seem to get the most enjoyment and to really "entertain angels unawares" are those who open their doors to missionaries and visiting speakers to their churches and delegates to conferences. The home, especially one in which there are children, where such guests are often present, is enriched immeasurably by these contacts. Missionaries are usually willing to talk about their work. If you and your husband and your children have sat around your living room listening to a man from Iran, let us say, talk about that country and perhaps show some of his slides, you will never again hear of that country without remembering your guest and feeling that you have a personal interest in it. But he does not need to be from a foreign country to be interesting. A missionary from a rural district entertained in a city home, or a man from a big city church staying in a country home, has much of interest to tell his host. In a sense they are all angels unawares.

Now, what do we need to offer hospitality? Well, naturally, we should have a certain amount of material comfort to offer. And yet even a leaky roof, a bumpy bed, scanty food, and a balky heater may be forgotten if the host and hostess are sincerely hospitable, and the guest is made sincerely wel-

come. Very often it is a temptation to lay too much emphasis on the worn place in the rug, the new furniture we need, and so on, and hold back from inviting a stranger into our home. We let Mrs. So and So, who has just bought a new house, do the honors. It is very possible, though, that the visiting missionary or minister is just a plain, ordinary person, too, and if he comes from some of the more backward parts of the mission field, our homes would be mansions to him.

Another fine way to show hospitality is by supporting the local Newcomers' Club.*

The person we should watch for particularly is the foreigner. "I lived in America as a student for four years," said a Chinese recently, "and I never once was inside an American home." What an opportunity we miss if we do not give the foreign student or the foreigner living and working in our midst a glimpse of normal American life!

The advantage to our children in entertaining foreigners is obvious. We sometimes lean over backwards in teaching our children patriotism and discover that they have acquired a contempt for

* If you do not have one in your community, it operates in this way: A group of men and women of the town form a club, and secure the names of newcomers into the community. In co-operation with the grocers and businessmen of the town, baskets are made up of canned goods and other gifts, and a member of the club calls on the newcomer with this basket, which is obviously advertising good will and not charity, and talks to them about their church affiliations and so on, making them feel welcome in the community. This might be a good project for your organization to sponsor if one is not already in existence, and the idea might be suggested as part of this talk.

foreigners. It is good for them to know that even though the foreigner may speak strangely accented English and look queer, he is a human being, and may be a very big person in his own land.

Hospitality is not only a gracious gesture and one which is rewarding to us, it is also recommended to us as a Christian virtue. Jesus mentioned it in Matthew 25: 35; it was mentioned in Romans 12: 13 as a Christian attribute, and in 1 Timothy 3: 2 as a requirement for a bishop; the writer to the Hebrews points out, in Hebrews 13: 2, that one may be entertaining angels without knowing it; and Peter warns us in his first epistle, 4: 9, that hospitality should not be given grudgingly.

Perhaps that last was a necessary suggestion. As when Jesus sent out the Twelve telling them to take nothing with them, and to stay overnight and eat with the people they visited, so the early apostles and their emissaries who visited the churches stayed with the members. As many of these early Christians were slaves or men and women who could not extend hospitality for other reasons, we can imagine the wealthier ones saying, "I had him last time. Do I have to take him again?" There is a word in that for us. When we have the opportunity to entertain some one from church, a student, or a business associate of our husband's, let us do it willingly however inconvenient it may

be, and make them really welcome in our home.

Hospitality should not be confined to church representatives, of course. We teach it to our children by making their friends welcome in our homes, and letting them have a part in preparing for them. The mother who thinks of the extra work and the extra noise and confusion if Junior's friend stays overnight, and refuses to let Junior invite him, is being very shortsighted. If indeed hospitality is one of the Christian virtues we must foster it in our children from the moment they start to make friends.

We must admit that all of us are not so situated that we can take a guest into our home. But every one of us can speak to the stranger, in church, can speak to the new members taken into fellowship of our congregation, and can lend a sympathetic ear to the seat-mate in bus or train who wants to talk to us.

Prayer

*Our Father, help us to make the stranger welcome in our community and in Thy church. Even though it may be hard for us to do it, give us courage to speak the welcoming word which will make the stranger feel at home and among friends. Give us tact and understanding when a stranger wants to talk to us in bus or train or in a public place, and give us the words to say to*

*them in their loneliness or trouble or perplexity. Help us to be kind and friendly and quick to open our homes to those who need our hospitality—to the strangers, the lonely, the bereaved, and the sick. Help us to do it all in the name, and for the sake, of Thy dear Son, our Lord. Amen.*

*Suggested Hymns:* I Would Be True; Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life; Blest Be the Tie That Binds.

# TALK XIV

## "Glorious Heritage"

**Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.**

**Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.**

**But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.**

**And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.**

**And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.** Acts 9:36-42.

Where would the church be without its faithful women members? True, the ministers and church officials of the New Testament are men—but if the truth were told, how many of the men in the pews in our churches today would be there so regularly if their wives did not encourage the habit? How many men—or women, either, for that matter—

would be church members at all if their mothers had not encouraged them to take the step by teaching and example? In all too many churches the women alone carry the burden of missions and mission education; offer pastoral aid when it is needed; handle much of the benevolences; cook for church suppers, and keep the church kitchen equipment, dishes, and table linens in order; are responsible for the bread and wine and communion linens and vessels; make up the majority of the church-school teaching staff; and in many other ways are pillars of strength to a congregation. Yes, where would *our* church be without *us* who are gathered here today?

From the very first chapters of the New Testament down to the present, women have played a large part in the growth and spread of the Christian faith.

There were three women who were prominent in the story of the Nativity.

First was Elisabeth, wife of the priest Zacharias and the mother of John the Baptist (Luke 1: 5-7, 24, 25). Then came Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1: 26-56). She probably did not take an active part in the early church, but tradition says that she gave Luke most of the intimate facts which he used in his Gospel. And, surely, being the mother of our Lord is enough to give her

the place of "most blessed among women." It was several centuries before the Church of Rome gave her the distorted place she now holds in that faith; we can admire Mary, but we must not worship her. The third woman was Anna. When the infant, Jesus, was taken to the temple and dedicated to the Lord, and was received by Simeon, Anna came in and recognized the child as the Lord. She was a prophetess, a widow of about eighty-four years, who lived at the temple and spent her days praying and prophesying and fasting (Luke 2: 36-38). Her words were added to other words and incidents of wonder which Mary stored up in her heart to marvel over.

During Jesus' life many women followed Him as His disciples and were taught by Him and healed by Him. One of these was Mary Magdalene (Luke 8: 2). There were Mary and Martha, sisters of Lazarus of Bethany (Luke 10: 38-42; John 11: 1; 12: 2, 3); and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward (Luke 8: 2; 24: 10). The three Marys—Jesus' mother, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and also Joanna, were with Him to the last bitter moment at the foot of the cross, and were the first at the empty tomb on that first Easter morning. It was they who carried the news of the risen Lord to the rest of the disciples.

When the church was established, women were

a part of its membership. For instance, after Peter was released from prison by the angel he went straight to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark (Acts 12: 12), where many were gathered together. With his usual economy of words, Luke gives us a good picture of the secrecy of the meeting. When Peter knocked, a girl came, a girl named Rhoda, who was probably given that work to do. She knew Peter's voice, but was so overcome with gladness that she forgot to let him in, but instead ran to tell the others. They would not believe her, and said she was mad. When she insisted they said it must be his angel, for they knew he was in prison chained between two guards. Peter continued to hammer away at the gate, and finally they let him in. We have just that little human, rather tenderly humorous, incident about Rhoda, but we know she must have been a faithful attendant at the meetings or she would not have been entrusted with the important post by the door, opening only to those who were recognized as fellow members.

In Corinth, Paul stayed with a couple who, like himself, were tentmakers by trade. The man was Aquila, of Pontus in Italy, and his wife was Priscilla. They were Jews, and driven out of Italy by the decree of the emperor Claudius. While he stayed with them he worked with them at tent-

making, and preached and taught in the synagogue. Later, in his epistle to the Romans, he writes: "Greet Priscilla and Aquila my fellow helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house" (Romans 16: 3-5.) What a story there must be behind those words!

One Sabbath morning Paul went out of Philippi to the river where groups came for prayer, and he sat down and talked to the women he found there. Among them was one outstanding personality, probably their leader, intelligent, already a worshiper of God, with more than average initiative. She listened attentively to Paul, and then she asked that she and her household be baptized. When that was done, she invited Paul and his friends to come and stay at her home in Philippi as long as they wished. This woman was Lydia, a businesswoman, a seller of purple, which means that she probably imported the valuable shellfish from Tyre from which the dye was made, made the dye, and wove and dyed the rich woolen and linen fabrics also known as "purple" for exclusive export to the nobility of Greece and Rome. She was evidently an influential figure in her community, and converting her to Christianity was a feather in Paul's cap

in the sight of the Philippians (Acts 16: 12-15).

One of the finest tributes paid to a New Testament mother is that paid to the young Timothy's mother and grandmother. Lois, the grandmother, started the family in the right way by training Eunice in the Jewish faith in which Lois was a believer. So strongly did she ground her daughter in that belief that it was not shaken when she married a Greek, and between them the two women reared the boy Timothy in the beliefs of the Jews. Paul knew of Timothy by reputation, for he was well known, and highly esteemed by the brethren. When Paul met him, he also liked him, and sent him out to visit the churches. Without the work of those two devoted and devout mothers, however, Timothy might have been lost to the Christian church (Acts 16: 1; 2 Timothy 1: 5).

So, connected with the beginnings of the early church we have businesswomen, mothers, housewives, the little slave girl Rhoda, Dorcas whose work was outlined in our Scripture reading, and many more like the unknown mother addressed in 2 John. How many thousands of women gave their lives as willing martyrs to their faith, we shall never know.

Yes, the church as we have it today, has come to us a glorious heritage from the hands of the early Christian women who were not afraid to

stand beside their men in defying the enemies of the church, even to the point of martyrdom, and who taught their children the Christian way. Missionary societies, sewing circles, and other organizations of women in the church are part of that heritage. May we continue to take a more vigorous part in the work of our church, and let us set as our goal that one hundred per cent of the women members of the church be enrolled in some church activity.

## Prayer

*Our Father, we pray that Thou wilt strengthen the faith and the influence and the spiritual understanding of us and of all women. As wives and mothers and teachers, may we be a high example to our families. Bless this organization, and similar ones in other churches. In the name of Thy Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

*Suggested Hymns:* Faith of Our Fathers; For All the Saints; Blest Be the Tie That Binds. Suggested solo, an arrangement of the *Magnificat.*

## TALK XV

### "Far Above Rubies"

**Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.** Proverbs 31: 10-12.

Let us examine this description of a perfect woman in Proverbs 31, and consider it in the light of women of today. Written centuries before the birth of Christ, it has a surprisingly modern ring

First of all, there is, as there should be, her relationship with her husband. In those days, even as today, there were some who were unfaithful, not only to the marriage vows, but to the household trusts. There were women who stole from the housekeeping money, women who married primarily for what they could get, and spent their whole married lives seeing that they got it. Husbands then, as now, sometimes came home to dirty houses, ill-cooked meals, and shrewish wives. But not if they were able to find one of these women who was more to be valued than the most precious of precious stones! In fact, this perfect wife not only avoids doing things which will worry or annoy

her husband, but she actively does things to help in every way she can.

**She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.** Proverbs 31: 13-15.

Today there is a revival of weaving as a hobby, and handlooms of various sizes may be bought. It is more convenient to use commercial yarns and threads than to spin one's own, however, but many women do other kinds of handwork—knitting, sewing, making hooked rugs, and so on.

And what a clear picture we get of the housewife coming along the street on a windy day, her skirts blowing, pulling a shopper's cart behind her laden with food from the local "cash and carry."

In Grandfather's day there was a supreme test for a housewife—was she willing to get up to prepare her man's breakfast? In those days there was no question of Grandfather rushing for the train or horse-car and grabbing a bite at the corner drug store on his way to store or office. He had to report for work anywhere from six to seven-thirty, and he had a good hearty breakfast before he left.

**She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.** Proverbs 31: 16, 17.

The perfect woman has outside interests. She considers a field and (the marginal note tells us) *taketh* it. It might have been a piece of her husband's land which was lying idle. By her own efforts she improved it.

Many women, through no fault of their own, are not strong. In Victorian days it was considered "genteel" to be "delicate." The writer of Proverbs does not say, notice, that she was strong. He implies that she made an effort to be strong, kept in physical trim, made herself do the things she *could* do.

**She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.** Proverbs 31: 18, 19.

She was careful to do good work, and she was willing to work beyond the daylight hours. More than that, she was provident. She had a supply of candles on hand to replace the one that went out.

**She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.** Proverbs 31: 20.

Taking care of her own household's needs, going outside into the vineyard, show the practical side of her nature. But she has a sympathetic side also. She sees and helps the poor and needy.

**She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.** Proverbs 31: 21, 22.

No cold snap sneaked up in the night and found this lady unprepared! Even if it snowed, she would send her family out into it secure in the knowledge that they were warmly dressed and comfortable.

She herself was what we would call "well-groomed." She made herself clothing of fancy weaves, and colors woven in patterns, and embroidery. She even indulged in the luxury of silk dyed purple.

**Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.** Proverbs 31:23.

Being married to a woman like that has its effect on a man. Her industry is a challenge to him, and her business acumen and her smart appearance are a source of pride to him. To have won the love and fidelity of such a paragon reflects upon his own worth. He can hold up his head with the best of them.

**She maketh fine linen, and selleth it: and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.** Proverbs 31:24.

Making fine linen and embroidered sashes is a little higher art than weaving and spinning, which might have been done in exchange for some household service.

**Strength and honour are her clothing: and she shall rejoice in time to come.** Proverbs 31:25.

This is a significant verse. Strength here probably means strength of character, and strength of will to choose the right thing.

Have you noticed how many, many women of middle age and over have unhappy expressions? So many women fight life. Change is a part of the natural process. We must expect our children to grow up and leave us. We must expect the advancing years to bring gray hairs, and physical changes. Whether we continue to be happy in life depends upon our attitude toward those changes, upon whether we turn our thoughts inward entirely, or continue to have outside interests. Also, much depends on how little in our past we have to regret.

The next verses tell why she rejoices: *She openeth her mouth with wisdom: and in her tongue is the law of kindness.* She does not have to look back with remorse upon the foolish things she said which caused trouble and heartache. Her words are kind, not only when she feels in the mood, but kindness is the *law* of her tongue. *She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.* Perhaps one of the greatest causes of unhappiness is idleness. *Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.* To be loved and appreciated by loved ones is cause enough indeed for rejoicing!

But verse 30 gives us the key to the whole thing. *Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands: and let her own works praise her in the gates.*

How true it is that favour is something withdrawn from us, and that beauty disappears with time! But the woman who fears the Lord is entitled to all the rewards which come to her. After all her virtues are listed, the writer sums it up by saying that other women have been virtuous too, but this one fears the Lord.

If she were living today, she would be among us in this gathering.

## Prayer

*We pray Thee, Lord, for strength to meet the little things as we go along our way. In our own homes, in the routine of our housekeeping and homemaking, help us to be serene and unworried. May we prepare for the future but be confident about it, not overanxious for the needs of the morrow. Help us to put back into our marriage (those of us who may have lost some of it) the thrill of those first months and years of homemaking. May we who are newly married keep that joyous enthusiasm for our husband and our home down through the years. Help us to make kind-*

*ness the "law of our tongue," so that the kind words will be the natural things to say. Help us to look outward, to see the needs in our church and in our community, and give us strength and wisdom to do them. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Suggested Hymns:* I Would Be True; Blest Be the Tie That Binds; Work for the Night Is Coming; For the Beauty of the Earth.

# TALK XVI

## "Apples of Gold"

**Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; . . . put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another . . . Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.** Ephesians 4: 22-32.

"I knew just what he was the minute he opened his mouth," some one says of a new acquaintance. One's conversation is a revelation of many things. It reveals one's education—not necessarily how far one went in school or college, but how much that education meant. It reveals one's thoughts. The overuse of slang, near-profanity, catch-phrases, betray the shallow thinker. The real thinker has the words for his thoughts and does not hesitate to use the less common words when they are the right ones.

The important things about conversation are the thoughts one expresses and the words one uses to express them.

The writer of Proverbs probably knew a number of people who always "opened their mouths and put their feet in them," just as today we know people who can be depended upon to say the wrong thing out of embarrassment, or lack of imagination, or unawareness of facts. In a sick room, or in a bereaved home, such people are at a loss, and when an unexpected emergency comes up, or in a situation demanding quick thinking and tactful speech, how those people can mess things up! But the right word at the right moment—what a gem that is! (Proverbs 25: 11).

In Jesus' day, the Romans' habit of swearing by the gods and by Mount Olympus proved to be just as contagious as slang is today. Jesus called His followers' attention to this kind of extravagant talk, and advised them to use plain language and not adorn it by picturesque oaths or the catch-phrases of the day (Matthew 5: 34-37). The same idea and practically the same words appear in James 5: 12. James had a great deal to say about that unruly member, the tongue, and the mischief it can cause.

Paul, and Peter, too, stressed the right kind of conversation: As becometh the gospel (Philippians

1:27); an example of believers (1 Timothy 4:12); holy (1 Peter 1:15); and honest (1 Peter 2:12).

**Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives: while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.** 1 Peter 3:1, 2.

Perhaps the most important place for the right kind of conversation is in the home.

You can almost tell the kind of home life a child has by the way he talks. This one comes from a cultured home where the conversation deals with books and music and subjects of the day intelligently discussed. That one has come out of an atmosphere of constant bickering and faultfinding, and he knows nothing about the finer things. Still another grows up knowing all the gossip of the neighborhood. One is argumentative and loses his temper in a discussion.

Probably the place where the family gets together the oftenest is around the dinner table. There after a hard day nerves may be edgy and tempers frayed. It is easy to allow the conversation to drift to the way teacher picked on Junior in school, the trouble the next-door neighbors are making, the annoying things that happened around the house, and the irritating things that came up at the office. Doctors tell us we should eat in pleasant surroundings, in pleasant company, and think

and talk of pleasant things for the good of our digestion. So, at least during the dinner hour, the parents should try to keep disturbing subjects from cropping up, centering on the funny things that happened during the day, the light side of the news, or even some phases of Junior's schoolwork. Turn the radio off. In a cultured home many topics should present themselves, and Junior listening in will get a background of information and intelligent guidance of thinking without knowing it. Junior should be encouraged to take part in the conversation, but not monopolize it. Conversation which is not understandable by him, or not wise for him to hear, should be kept for later when the parents or other adults are alone.

Among the subjects for free discussion should be religious ones. That is why it is so important that both parents be of the same faith. It is better to avoid religious subjects altogether than to quarrel about them, or criticize church members, the sermon, the choir, or the church in general.

Words are like seeds sown in fertile soil when they are dropped before a child. The most unexpected ones take root and flourish while those we wish to implant fall by the wayside. It seems that Junior needs to hear the profane, dirty, or vulgar word only once from a chance passer-by, and it is his! But weed it out.

Children from refined, cultured homes sometimes go through a phase in which they tell each other all the naughty words they know, and they can collect quite a few! Sometimes they slip out before the family, and sometimes they say them to shock you, but the wise parent will not overlook them. If parents are in the habit of using clean words, the right words to express themselves, and avoid profanity or near-profanity even when angry, the child is likely to be on guard against saying the improper words around home, and every bit of restraint helps. But in homes where the name of God is taken in vain many times a day, and profanity is a careless addition to normal conversation, the child feels no such restraint. When he has grown up he either has a tough battle to overcome his filthy speech, or he does not try. In either case he finds it a barrier to entrance among Christian people.

**A good man out of the treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.** Luke 6: 45.

**Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man.** Matthew 15: 18, 19a.

We as women refine the conversation of a mixed group; as wives we have a strong spiritual

influence on our husbands through tactful conversation; as mothers we have much to do, through the things we say, with the cultural and moral background of our young children; as members of a women's club we can show our approval or disapproval of gossip and vulgarity. It is the heart—or as we know today, the mind—which determines what we shall say and how we shall say it. If we never use profanity or vulgar language, we can be at ease in any company, and honor the Christ whose name we wear.

Prayer

*Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me . . . Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.* (Psalm 51: 1-3, 10, 14, 15).

*Suggested Hymns:* I Would Be True; Open Mine Eyes; I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go; Blest Be the Tie That Binds.

## TALK XVII

### Within Your Hand

**And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is at the gate! And the three brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: but David would not drink of it, but poured it out to the Lord, and said, My God forbid it me that I should do this thing: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it. Therefore he would not drink it.** 1 Chronicles 11: 17-19.

We take so many things for granted, and it is not until we lose them permanently or temporarily that we realize how precious they are. We need to get away from home and loved ones occasionally, to get a perspective on them and know how much they really mean to us. In the midst of our humdrum, everyday duties around the house we sometimes feel it is all drudgery and monotony. But let us get away from it for a vacation trip, and how glad we are to come back to it! We know, too, if we have made the right kind of home, that our children away in boarding school and college are looking back on it with affection, and those who

have established homes of their own know that even they can not take the same place in their hearts as the home of their childhood days.

The thing we take most for granted is the privilege of being American citizens. Most of us became citizens simply by registering when we became of voting age. In school we learned patriotic songs, the history of our country, and how the government is run. We know that men gave their lives to establish this nation, and more lives were given that all its citizens, regardless of sex, race, or color, might vote freely in elections. But on election day, an appalling number of voters accept the gift as their due, or ignore it, forgetting that the sacrifice of others who obtained it for us has made it a dearly bought privilege.

Millions of men and women here in America have the right to vote for their choice of candidates, the right to sway the policies of government, a right which can not be bought by money or social position. And yet many voters do not use this right, chiefly because of indifference. Even when the candidates are running for the highest office in the government—that of President—only a percentage of the voters cast their ballots.

This is strange, for a sure way to start an argument in a large group of men and women is to make a remark which is controversial politically.

In the heat of a political campaign men's tempers flare—and women's also—like gunpowder.

In many cases one's political bias is inherited, unconsciously, through hearing the menfolk of the family arguing about it. "Voting for the best man" is more popular now than it was thirty years or so ago, when it was considered a minor kind of treason to step outside party lines. The women's vote had a great deal to do with that, for women are not bound by traditional party lines, and do not vote out of loyalty to father or husband usually.

Politics is not naturally a woman's field, but women have entered it in increasing numbers, and it is a heartening sign. For in politics as in business and in home life, a Christian woman can elevate the ideals of the nation.

Perhaps you ladies are not especially interested in politics as such. But we are all certainly interested in good citizenship. We all wish to live in a good community, and a good community is made up of people the majority of whom are good citizens. A good citizen is law-abiding, civic-minded, and while he may exercise his right to criticize the government and its workings, he will defend his country against attack from within or without. Good citizens are made in the homes of the land. Mothers are starting to teach good citizenship when they train their small children to be obedient, to

adjust themselves to the family, and to be loyal to their brothers and sisters and parents. In most cases the family is democratic—that is, the parents and children talk things over together and plan together. In these days there are few parents who insist on strict obedience, and children being seen but not heard.

In the home, too, are set up ideals of honor, honesty, fair play, morality, courageous standing up for one's convictions, thoughtful consideration for the good of the family and community in preference to one's own wishes. The parents are the ones who set those examples, and as the mother is with the children more than the father, usually, a great deal depends upon her. She can prevent a hotly partisan argument from degenerating into a senseless wrangle of extravagant claims and name-calling.

A middle-aged woman once told about the first Presidential election she remembered. After weeks of excited argument among and between the male elements of the community, the candidate her father opposed won the election. She never forgot her surprise and shock when she found that everything was the same as usual the next morning, the terrible things her father had foretold had not occurred, and even the school was standing and ready for the usual routine! She never took political campaigns

and their heated arguments too seriously after that.

One big thing which can be done about political issues in the home is the attention given to religious angles. Whether a man is Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish will make a difference in his personal ideals, but the main thing is—how does he live up to his professed beliefs? Did he attend his church services regularly *before* he began his political career? How does he stand with other members of his church? Has he taken an active part in the volunteer work of his church? It is only as God-fearing voters elect God-fearing candidates to office that this nation can remain a "blessed nation whose God is the Lord." (Psalm 33: 12.) Solomon, the greatest king the Hebrews ever had, was aware of the value of righteousness in matters of state, when he wrote or at least included in his compilation, the proverb "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14: 34.) The "nation" today is the product of homes of the past. Today, future statesmen, from the President on down to the lowest local official, are boys and girls in the homes of the country being trained in citizenship by their parents. The welfare of the entire nation of tomorrow is in the hands of parents and teachers of today.

Let us read together as our closing prayer, Verses 11 to 15 of Psalm 144.

## Prayer

*Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood: That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace: That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store: that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets: That our oxen may be strong to labour; that there be no breaking in, nor going out; that there be no complaining in our streets. Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord.* Psalm 144: 11-15.

*Suggested Hymns:* God of Our Fathers; America the Beautiful; Star Spangled Banner; O God Our Help in Ages Past; A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.

## TALK XVIII

### According to His Labor

**Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.**

**According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.** 1 Corinthians 3: 8-11.

Every one works—did you ever think of that? It may be some comfort, when you feel that you are burdened with more work than any one else in the world, to realize that a lot of other people are thinking the same thing. You may reply, "Oh, but the rich people—they don't have to work!" But—think again. Even those people who live on their incomes and seem to live lives of leisure and idleness have to work, and work hard, to fill the empty hours and days! It is a grotesque kind of work, in our way of thinking, but the people who practice it suffer as much from boredom as we suffer from overwork. So there is no cause for envy, but rather for pity, for the so-called "idle rich."

Miscellaneous Bible passages concerning work are interesting to study. God told Adam he should earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, when He cast him and Eve out of the Garden of Eden, where they had not spent their time in leisure, but in keeping the garden. God's decree to Adam and Eve was the beginning of work, in the way that we think of it—with stress and strain, sweat and toil, the odds against you, and every bit of progress hard-won. But thank God for it. What would you take in exchange for the feeling of peace and satisfaction at the completion of a hard job?

Another important episode in the history of work is when God commanded that the seventh day should be His day, and should be free from work. Do we observe the Lord's Day, the day those who live under the New Testament observe as the day of rest, in the way we should? Do we devote that day exclusively to the Lord's work?

Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 3: 13, ". . . every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God." This is a pleasing picture. There is fairness and justice about it. Solomon paints a less pleasing picture in chapter 4, verse 8, where he speaks of the man who is alone, with no dependents, and yet he works constantly and amasses great wealth, never

asking, "For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good?" Solomon goes on to say that two working together are better than one, because they share their rewards. So it is in the home, with husbands and wives, each in their way, working and sharing.

Jesus had a very high ideal of work. He was only twelve when He was conscious of the work God had for Him to do (Luke 2:49). "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," He said when the Pharisees criticized Him for healing on the Sabbath day (John 5:17).

It was an old law that the oxen which were used to trample the grain out of the husks—a primitive form of threshing—should not be muzzled, but be permitted to eat as much as they wished in return for their labor. So the man who planted a vineyard, or tended his flocks, was entitled to a share of what he raised (1 Corinthians 9:7, 9, 10). Jesus said when He sent out the twelve that they should expect food and drink from those with whom they stayed, for "the labourer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7).

We can read into those verses something of the condition of labor at that time. The working man of lower middle class and under could be exploited and be pushed down even lower into poverty. Very small children worked and no

one thought anything of it. And the old and sick and disabled had but one alternative to working for starvation wages—begging—unless they had families to support them. Jesus looked about Him at the many who worked from the first streak of sunrise to the last dim ray of light at night and was filled with compassion for them. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," He said (Matthew 11:28).

Christ had something to say, too, about the man who worked for material things and forgot the things of the spirit. He told His audience a parable about it as recorded in Luke 12:16-21. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth," He told the multitude, "but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you" (John 6:27—Read also verses 28-35).

Sometimes we are inclined to put too much emphasis on the financial returns for our labor. We are prone to measure a man's success by the amount of money he earns. Very often some of the most rewarding work is done by men and women on a voluntary basis. Teaching in church school, singing in the choir, taking part in the activities of church organizations such as this one, Red Cross and charity efforts, and soliciting funds for Community Chest and Salvation Army and other

worthy causes, all have rewards not to be measured in dollars and cents.

We should be grateful that children learn that lesson early in school. They learn that the harder they work the higher their marks will be and the higher their standing in their classes. This is a reward for work which has nothing to do with money. Also in a well-regulated household the children learn to take a share of the household activities. This, too, is work which brings its own reward. They learn to take pride in a neat room, well-cared for clothing, careful personal grooming. We as parents are responsible for much of the attitude our children take toward work while they are children and when they grow up. From the very earliest days a child can be taught responsibility, a sharing in the work of the home, an understanding of the economic conditions of the family. Children should have free time for play, of course, but it is often good for an older child to take an after-school job, such as baby-sitting, delivering newspapers, mowing lawns, running errands, and so on. Such work gives an appreciation of how hard Dad has to work for the money he so generously hands out.

On the other hand, we should realize that the main business of a child is school work—the school is his world and his lessons his work—and every-

thing which we can do to make it easier for him to study should be done. We can attend PTA meetings, get to know the children's teachers, arrange recreation so that it does not interfere with home work or school activities, help the children to understand and solve school difficulties which may arise. Children who grow up in a home where every one is busy and takes obligations seriously will not find difficulty in adjusting themselves to the demands of the business or professional world.

Let us be aware, and make our children aware, of the dignity and responsibility of work, considering it a privilege rather than a curse. When Dad carries out a project successfully, let us tell the children about it, not as an excuse for asking for more money, but as a reason for rejoicing in Dad's ability. Dad's bread-winning should not be taken for granted, and neither should Mother's cooking or homemaking. A new recipe which was enjoyed by the family should be commended, and new slip covers or drapes which Mother has made should at least be noticed. So with the chores of the children. An occasional word of commendation for a job well done means a great deal, and, of course, work which is volunteered or done as a surprise should always be noticed and approved.

Let us remember with Paul that we can only

start ourselves and our children in the right direction—it is God who will enable them to grow to fine manhood and womanhood and increase their spiritual stature. But we are builders of their characters and of our own, and the most solid foundation for home life or for character is faith in Jesus Christ, and a faithful carrying out of His teachings. (Read the Scripture quoted at the beginning of the talk.)

## Prayer

*Our dear heavenly Father: Teach us to understand the sacredness of work, to appreciate what a privilege we have in being permitted to work with Thee in church and home and community for Thy kingdom. May we remember to say the words of appreciation for work well done. May we not take the financial help of the breadwinner for granted, but remember the effort and ambition and triumph that has gone into his achievement. May we remember also to work for the spiritual rewards and not think too much of the material gain. Bless us, dear Lord, and bless the work of our hands. Amen.*

*Suggested Hymns:* Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life, Work for the Night Is Coming. A soloist might sing He Shall Lead His Flock from the *Messiah.*

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